Emerging issues in child and adolescent health:
Social media, sexting, and cyber bullying

Objectives

• Objective 1: Identify the prevalence, gender differences, and potential consequences of emerging social media trends (sexting, cyberbullying).

• Objective 2: Define digital wellness and name three tools children and families can utilize to assist children in creating a positive digital footprint.

• Objective 3: Explain strategies for discussing sexting, cyberbullying, and other social media behaviors with teen patients and their parents (What’s important for them to know; How to talk to patients; Resources)

Goals for Digital Wellness

• Children make choices that ensure internet safety.

• Children think critically about media and digital decisions.

• Children can utilize the internet and online tools for valuable information.

• Children develop online reputation management skills.

Technology Risk Factors 3.0

• Cyberbullying

• Body Image Comparison

• Sexting

• Choosing to view inappropriate content

• Over-sharing personal life events

Defining Cyberbullying

• Cyberbullying is bullying or harassment that occurs online

• Like traditional bullying, cyberbullying relates to:
  - Negative school climate
  - Lack of peer support
  - Approval of bullying by peers (Williams & Guerra, 2007)

• Internet harassment happens most frequently by peers
  - 73% of study participants who were victims of cyberbullying reported they knew the identity of their bully (anonymous survey, 1,400+ teens, 12-17, Juvonen & Gross 2008; Williams & Guerra, 2007)
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Defining Cyberbullying
- Traditional, face-to-face bullying remains the dominant mode of bullying, (Ybarra, et al)
- Harassment of youth from outside adult perpetrators is rare (Berkman Center)
- Youth most at risk to receive aggressive sexual solicitations
  - Youth who send personal information to unknown people
  - Youth who are talking to unknown people about sex (Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007)

Risks of Cyberbullying
- Similar effects as traditional bullying
  - Depression
  - Decreased academic performance
  - Loss of self-esteem
  - Suicide
  - Violence
  
  National Crime Prevention Council, Patchin, J. W. & Hinduja, S

Cyberbullying Prevalence
- Across two studies with over 1,000 teens:
  - 25% reported being bullied at least monthly in person
  - Compared with an average of 10% bullied online,
  - 7% via telephone (cell or landline),
  - 8% via text messaging
- Most bullying behavior still happens in person versus online.
  
  Michele L. Ybarra, et al

Cyberbullying vs. Traditional Bullying
- Minimal physical and social cues
- Reduction of traditional power imbalances found in face-to-face bullying
  
  American Psychological Association Practice Research & Policy, 2012

Additional Risks of Cyberbullying
- Anonymity
- Lack or non-verbal cues
- Fluctuation roles within the bullying paradigm
  
  Postmes, Tom, and Russell, Spears, 1998; Bostic & Brunt, 2011

Technology and Body Image
Tips for Teens and Families
- Build a “body positive presence” online.
- Interrupt your social media “news feed” with positive messages
- For example, joining (liking) positive organizations which keep you focused on wellness and positive dialog.
  
  Clemmer, K. Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt
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**Digital Youth Project**
- Study from 2005 to 2009, 800 youth, 5000 hours of internet use.
- Findings indicated a large discrepancy between youth and adults about the usefulness and purpose of online technology.
- Adults see social networking as distracting and dangerous.
- Youth feel participation in social networking provide literacy tools to succeed in a contemporary world.

*Digital Youth Project, Ito et al., MacArthur Foundation*

**Positive Youth Perspective**
- Youth describe gaining skills to manage public profile and online reputation.
- New media allows for autonomy and exploration not found in traditional classroom settings.
- New technologies provide opportunity for creativity in new and changing formats.

*Digital Youth Project, Ito et al., MacArthur Foundation*

**Considerations for Schools**
- Educate the community about responsible internet use.
- Clear communication to students about disciplinary consequences of cyberbullying at your school.
- Reinforce your school’s message about appropriate use of online technology.
- Establish and maintain a school climate of respect and integrity.

*Hinduja & Patchin, 2011*

**Considerations for Parents**
- Level of oversight.
- Understanding privacy, permanence, and publicity.
- Discussing safety.
- The utility and value of new technologies.

**Topics to explore with Youth**
- Online versus in-person relationships.
- Balance of online activities.
- Taking safety precautions online.
- Cyberbullying and violation of boundaries.
- Defining online “friendship”.
- Issues of privacy, permanence, publicity.

**Tips for Youth**
- Avoid using derogatory (Negative) words to describe others.
- Discourage teasing and put-downs (of yourself and your friends).
- Focus on internal qualities and effort rather than external appearance.
- Think about the person behind the post, rather than dehumanizing your news feed.

*Clemmer, K. Center for Eating Disorders at Sheppard Pratt*
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Building a Community of Awareness

• Parent and Teacher Education
• Media Literacy
• Mining data online with critical thinking skills
• Time management / Life Balance
• Character Education (e.g. Identity Consistency)
• Reputation management skills on and offline

Technology as a Canvas

• Technology can build positive connections, promote thoughtful collaborations and inspire creative ideas.
• However, managing relationships online, as in life, can pose difficult dilemmas for children.
• Young people are producing content that becomes their brand.
• The internet is merely a canvas where conversations and ideas are displayed and discussed.

References

• American Psychological Association Research Roundup: Cyberbullying, Practice Update, March 2010
• American Psychological Association Research Roundup: More on cyberbullying, Practice Update, January 2012
• Berkman Center of Internet and Society Next Generation Connectivity A review of broadband Internet transitions and policy Harvard University, 2009
• Clemmer, Kate. Social Networks: Building a Body Positive Presence Online. The Center for Eating Disorders Blog, 2012
• Ito et al., John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Digital Media & Learning, Digital Youth Project, MacArthur Foundation
• Kaiser Family Foundation Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds

Thank You!

Questions or Comments?
Emerging issues in child and adolescent health: Social media, sexting, and cyber bullying

Amy B. Acosta, PhD (BCM)
Jeff R. Temple, PhD (UTMB)
September 20, 2013

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Overview

- Social media
  - Positives
  - Potential negatives
- Sexting
  - Growing phenomenon
  - Should we care?
  - Dating it Safe study
  - Relationship to sex and sexual behavior
  - Relationship to psychosocial health
  - Role of healthcare professionals
- Role of healthcare professionals

What is Social Media?

- Any website that allows social interaction
  - Facebook
  - Club Penguin
  - YouTube
  - Blogs

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The positives
- Use of social media benefits children and adolescents by:
  - Enhancing communication
  - Social connection
  - Technical skills
  - Spur individual and collective creativity
  - Foster identity development
  - Connect with friends, classmates, and people with shared interests.
  - Vehicle for socially anxious students to communicate with peers.

Not going away
- Over half of youth log on to their favorite social media site more than once per day
- A quarter log on more than 10 times per day
- Many are always connected through their smartphones

Reflection of offline lives
- Clique forming
- Cyberbullying and online harassment
- Sexual experimentation (sexting)

Complicated by:
- Anonymity
- Having to be “on” 24/7
- Sleep deprivation

What is Sexting?
- A combination of the words “sex” and “texting”
- The practice of electronically sending sexually suggestive/explicit images or messages (via cell phone, email, or other electronic mediums)
- Sending
- Receiving
- Sharing

Sexting as a new phenomenon
- Ubiquity of smartphones
- Popular press
- Psychosocial health and tragic cases
- Potential legal consequences

Smartphones
- Increase in media/social networking outlets and cell phone usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rise in % of teens who had a cell phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lenhart, 2009
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Texting
- 2.5 billion text messages are sent per day in the US
- Kids between the ages of 12 and 17 send a median of 60 times a day -- up from 50 in 2009.

Legal cases
"Sexting" Leads to Child Porn Charges for Teens

What teens say about sexting
- Teens say (National Campaign, 2008):
  - Teens are more forward and aggressive, using words and images, than they are in "real life"
  - Exchanging sexts may make dating or hooking up more likely
  - Exchanging sexts sets up expectation that teens should date or hook up

Lawsuit over "sexting" suicide settled

Why Sext?
From focus groups (Lenhart, 2009):
- An exchange between romantic partners (to have sex or instead of sex)
- Exchange between people who want to be in a relationship
- Exchange between partners shared with others
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### Sexting with nude/semi-nude photos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Population</th>
<th>% who sent</th>
<th>% who received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Campaign (2008)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenhart (2009)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson (2010)</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowell, Burgess, &amp; Flores (2011)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell et al (2012)</td>
<td>1%*</td>
<td>5.9%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Public health importance?
- Possible indicator of actual sexual behavior
- Chicken or egg
  - “Gateway” to sex and risky sex
  - May invite sexual advances from an intimate partner or other peers
- May increase the level of comfort and escalate flirtation behavior.
- May be a good indicator of sexual behavior

### Dating It Safe
- A 6 year longitudinal study of risk and protective factors of:
  - Teen dating violence
  - Other high-risk adolescent behaviors
- 1042 students from 7 public high schools in 5 Houston-area school districts
- Ages 14-18
- 4 sexting items included

### Prevalence of dating and risky sexual behaviors among females and males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever dated</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever had sex</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1 partner in last year</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOD sex</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sexting Results of DIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sent</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been asked</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At all</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little bit</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bothered by request for sent
Emerging issues in child and adolescent health: Social media, sexting, and cyber bullying

Dating, risky sexual behaviors, & sexting
- For the sample, having started dating, having had sex, having multiple sex partners, & using alcohol and other drugs before sex were all higher among:
  - Those who sent
  - Received
  - Or asked for a sext

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sent a sext</th>
<th>Asked for a sext</th>
<th>Been asked to sext</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever dated</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever had sex</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 1 partner in last year</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOD sex</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
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Dating, sex, & sexting
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For girls...
- Those who had sent a sext, 77.4% reported having sex
- Whereas for those who had not sent a sext, 42% reported having sex
- Girls who were not at all bothered by having been asked for a sext, 95.7% reported having had sex
- Whereas 44.9-71.4% of those who were bothered to some degree reported that they have had sex

For boys...
- 81.8% of boys who sent a sext reported that they have had sex before
- Whereas 45.4% of those who had never sent a sext reported that they have had sex
- Unlike the girls, there were no significant associations among the degree to which boys were bothered by request for a sext and any dating & risky sexual behaviors

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Table 2: Unadjusted and adjusted associations between sexting and psychosocial health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexting</th>
<th>Unadjusted OR (CI)</th>
<th>Adjusted OR (CI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression symptoms</td>
<td>1.33 (0.90 - 1.78)</td>
<td>1.27 (0.92 - 1.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety symptoms</td>
<td>1.00 (0.96 - 1.04)</td>
<td>1.02 (0.98 - 1.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulsivity</td>
<td>1.35 (1.14-1.60)**</td>
<td>1.20 (1.08-1.56)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>2.94 (2.10 - 4.12)*****</td>
<td>2.26 (1.56 - 3.28)*****</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Adjusted for prior sexual behavior, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and highest parent education.
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What Healthcare Providers can do...

- Ethical handling of social media trends
- Ask teen patients about sexting
- An opportunity to discuss sexual behavior and
- AAP urges providers to discuss teen sexting with patients and patients’ parents

For more details:
http://www.aap.org/advo
cacy/releases/june09social
media.htm

Thank You!

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Public health priority?

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